



# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS**

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY**



## NATIONAL SALUTE TO VETERAN PATIENTS

February 14-21, 2021, is National Salute to Veteran Patients week.

This week is our opportunity to say thank you to a special group of men and women who are cared for in United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) medical centers, outpatient clinics, domiciliaries, and nursing homes.

It also provides an opportunity for all of us to become acquainted with the volunteer opportunities within the medical center. Click here to learn more about VA volunteer opportunities at VA facilities — <https://www.volunteer.va.gov/>.



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# VA OFFERS MILLIONS IN GRANT FUNDING FOR ADAPTIVE SPORTS TO SUPPORT DISABLED VETERANS

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is accepting applications from community organizations through March 31 — for up to \$16 million in grant funding — to provide adaptive sports and therapeutic recreational opportunities for disabled veterans and members of the armed forces.

VA research and clinical experience shows that physical activity is important to maintaining good health and improving overall quality of life.

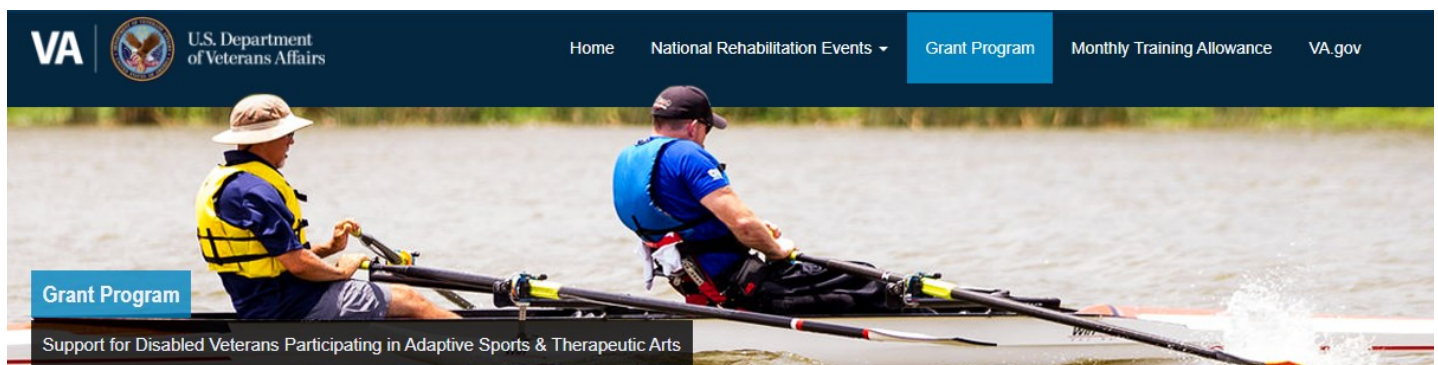
VA awards grants to qualifying organizations to plan, develop, manage, and implement a variety of sports and activities for Veterans, including cycling, kayaking, archery, and skiing. To be eligible for a grant, an organization must be a non-federal entity with significant experience in managing a large-scale adaptive sports program.

“Through these grants, the VA is extending its reach to assist organizations that help veterans in their communities to engage in sports and recreation,” said VA Director of the National Veterans Sports Programs and Special Events Leif Nelson. “Veterans will have more opportunities to learn new skills related to their sport of choice and embrace the positive influence and benefits of adaptive sports and equine activities.”

In fiscal year 2020, the VA awarded nearly \$15 million in adaptive sports grants to 116 organizations headquartered in 37 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. Programs funded through these grants are estimated to serve more than 13,000 veterans and service members across the country. Of the total awarded, \$1.5 million was used to assist organizations that offer equine-assisted therapy to support mental health.

Applications must be submitted online by March 31, at 3 p.m. EST. The VA will announce award decisions this fall based on a competitive selection.

Details of the Notice of Funding Opportunity, including frequently asked questions and additional information can be viewed under the “Grant Program” tab online at [VA Adaptive Sports Grant Program](#).



# UPCOMING VABHHCS EVENTS

The VABHHCS will be hosting a Whole Health Virtual Wellness Fair Wednesday, February 17. The event will be held on MS Teams – the link can also be accessed on their Facebook page under events <https://www.facebook.com/VABlackHills> and their website: [Whole Health Virtual Wellness Fair - VA Black Hills Health Care System](https://www.wholehealthvirtualwellnessfair.com).



## Whole Health Virtual Wellness Fair

Presented by

VA



U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs  
Veterans Health Administration  
Black Hills Health Care System

8:00 a.m. Introduction

8:05 a.m. Whole Health

8:30 a.m. Connected Health

9:00 a.m. IPV Assistance Program

9:30 a.m. Health Care for Homeless Vets

Join Online

Will be offered to you through MS Teams Platform, join through a web browser or the MS Teams app.

Join for the whole day or only for the sessions that interest you. Use the same link above to join all sessions.

For those without computer or internet connections, call: +1 872-701-0185  
Conference ID: 656 084 504#

10:00 a.m. Addictive Disorder Services

10:30 a.m. The Vets Center

11:00 a.m. MOVE

11:30 a.m. Enrollment and Eligibility

11:55 a.m. Closing

On Sunday, February 14, the VABHHCS will offer the Four Chaplains Ceremony, using COVID precautions of masking and distancing. For anyone who does not feel comfortable attending in person, the event will be broadcast on Facebook Live at noon MT on <https://www.facebook.com/FirstPresbyterianSturgis>.

### All are welcome to attend the Four Chaplain Service February 14, 2021

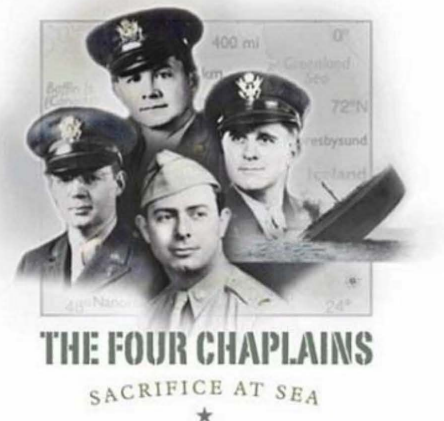
Join us as we remember and honor the service and sacrifice of the Four Chaplains. Local Veteran Service Organizations will present wreaths from each branch of service during this memorable ceremony.

**February 14, 2021 at Noon**  
**First Presbyterian Church**  
**1319 Junction Ave, Sturgis**

Lunch will be served at the Vets Club following the service  
868 Main St. in Sturgis

“Valor is a gift,” Carl Sandburg once said. “Those having it never know for sure whether they have it until the test comes.”

Physical distancing and face coverings will be required



Reverend Fox, Rabbi Goode, Reverend Poling and Father Washington passed life's ultimate test. In doing so, they became an enduring example of extraordinary faith, courage and selflessness.



# VA MEDICAL ADVANCES

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) launched a new genomic research tool designed to help VA researchers learn more about how conditions such as cancer, diabetes and heart disease affect veterans from minority backgrounds.

Debuting in January, the laboratory tool, known as the Ethnic Focused genotyping array or DNA chip, will test more than 750,000 genetic variants, including over 300,000 that are more common in minority populations.

The tool was custom-built for VA's [Million Veteran Program](#) (MVP) which studies how genes affect health.

"This is potentially a game changer in medical research for Black and Hispanic veterans and other members of minority ethnic and racial groups," said Acting VA Under Secretary for Health Richard A. Stone, M.D. "Thanks to MVP, the VA is leading the way in health research that will benefit communities that have traditionally been underserved by the health care system and underrepresented in medical research."

A genotyping chip is a piece of glass about the size of postage stamp containing hundreds of thousands of tiny bits of synthetic DNA. These DNA probes allow researchers to identify genetic variants in the DNA of research volunteers.

The probes also associate certain health traits — like increased risk for a disease or unfavorable reactions to a drug with specific genetic patterns. This can lead to new treatment approaches for patients with those gene profiles.

With more than 830,000 veteran volunteers currently enrolled, MVP is one of the largest health and genetic databases in the world and has generated dozens of influential scientific publications.

Currently, over 30 ongoing studies based on MVP data are examining conditions ranging from heart disease and diabetes to post-traumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia and suicide risk. In recent months, researchers have begun using MVP data to study the impacts of COVID-19 on veterans.

MVP is also one of the world's most diverse genomic databases, with about a quarter of enrollees belonging to minority groups. MVP has been successful in engaging veterans from minority communities in



part thanks to the VA's [Center for Minority Veterans](#). The two plan to collaborate this year and beyond, to further boost the involvement of Black, Hispanic and other minority veterans in the landmark genomic research program.

# RIVER CITIES PUBLIC TRANSIT PARTNERS WITH SOUTH DAKOTA VETERANS COUNCIL

River Cities Public Transit (RCPT), based out of Pierre, has been a great partner with Post 20 American Legion in their endeavors to provide free transportation for veterans to and from their medical appointments. Post 20 has secured VA Highly Rural Transportation Grants to assist veterans in over 35 South Dakota counties and partners with River Cities and Prairie Hills Public Transit to provide that transportation.

As one of the providers assisting veterans with their transportation needs, RCPT is growing their commitment to assist veterans by partnering with the South Dakota Veterans Council (SDVC). RCPT has numerous busses located in the Sioux Falls area and have opted to promote the SDVC Foundation for the State Veterans Cemetery on these respective busses.

Look for this artwork on their busses. RCPT has bought the domain: [www.honorburial.com](http://www.honorburial.com) to use as a forwarding domain, and will point it to the correct donation page on the foundation website.

They have also added a QR code so people can scan and donate from their phone. It too will go to the correct page on the foundation website.

Special thanks to the team at River Cities Public Transit for partnering with the Veterans Council and the great messaging they have developed.

## South Dakota State Veterans Cemetery



**Donate at [honorburial.com](http://honorburial.com)**



# VABHHCS MOVES VACCINATION BLITZ INDOORS

The VA Black Hills Health Care System (VABHHCS) second-dose vaccine blitz will move from a drive-thru delivery to an indoors delivery because of predicted extreme weather on Saturday, February 13th.

Veterans will be directed to Building 113 or Lot 3 parking lots.

Vaccinations will be given in two areas—Building 113, Room S143 and Specialty Care.

Staff will be available to answer questions and direct veterans to the vaccination areas.

Because of the frigid temperatures expected, shuttle transportation from the parking lot to the main entrances will be offered to anyone who would like the assistance. This is an appointment only clinic for second doses of the vaccination.

On Monday, February 15, a first-dose vaccine blitz will be held at Fort Meade, Rapid City, and Hot Springs. Any veteran falling into one of the priority groups listed may call 877-339-6837 to schedule an appointment.

VA Black Hills is offering the Moderna vaccine to the following priority groups:

- Veterans 75 years and older

- Veterans receiving hemodialysis, chemotherapy, and SCI/TBI patients

- Veterans experiencing homelessness, especially those living in congregate settings

- Veterans determined to be high-risk by their provider

- Veterans who are considered to be an essential worker, and

- Veterans ages 65-74.





# STATE VETERANS HOME RECEIVES AWARD OF EXCELLENCE

The Michael J. Fitzmaurice State Veterans Home was recently presented the Senior Crimestoppers 2020 Safe Facility Award of Excellence.

The Senior Crimestoppers promote secure senior living facilities in nursing homes, HUD communities, state veterans homes, assisted living communities, and independent living communities with an enhanced quality of life.

This nationwide crime prevention program safeguards against theft, abuse, neglect, financial exploitation, and other crimes and actions.



# UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb 15—State Offices will be closed

June 24-27—American Legion State Convention—Huron

Aug 16-19—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre



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